



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
T. PAGE THARP GOVERNMENTAL BUILDING
102 STARKSVILLE AVENUE NORTH, LEESBURG, GEORGIA 31763

MONDAY, APRIL 17, 2023 AT 3:30PM
T. PAGE THARP BUILDING
KINCHAFOONEE CONFERENCE ROOM
WWW.LEE.GA.US

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
FINANCE COMMITTEE

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Billy Mathis, Chairman	District 3
Luke Singletary, Vice-Chairman	District 2
Dennis Roland, Commissioner	District 1
Chris Guarnieri, Commissioner	District 4
George Walls, Commissioner	District 5

COUNTY STAFF

Christi Dockery, County Manager
Kaitlyn Good, County Clerk
Jimmy Skipper, County Attorney

The Finance Committee of Lee County Board of Commissioners met for a Special Called Meeting on Monday, April 17, 2023 at 3:30pm. The meeting was held in the Kinchafoonee Room of the Lee County T. Page Tharp Governmental Building in Leesburg, Georgia. Those present were Chairman Billy Mathis, Commissioner Dennis Roland, Commissioner Chris Guarnieri, County Manager Christi Dockery, and Finance Director Heather Jones.

Chairman Mathis called the meeting to order at 3:30PM.

CALL TO ORDER

(A) **Discussion of various financial matters of the County.**

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Board of Commissioners received a copy of the draft budget for FY 2023-2024 as well as a number of handouts from staff regarding current financials.

Chairman Mathis began the discussion by stating that the total revenue is around \$32.5 million, which is an increase of \$1.245 million, as confirmed by Finance Director Heather Jones. Ms. Jones stated that the proposed budget is \$32,416,000 while the current year's budget is \$29,486,000. Chairman Mathis asked what the last auditing expenses were, to which Ms. Jones replied \$27,307,900. Ms. Jones added that there is a \$837,000 increase in salaries, \$509,000 increase in contingency, \$1.119 million increase in capital lease payments (representing the ARPA payments, but the revenue will be there to offset). The solar farm revenue will also show up in this year's projected revenue.

Chairman Mathis stated that the budget is fairly fluid every year and fluctuates very little. Commissioner Guarnieri asked Finance Director Heather Jones the purpose behind having a contingency fund, who replied that it is for unexpected items and expenses that are not covered within a line item on the budget.

Chairman Mathis suggested hiring a company or individual to complete and maintain landscaping for several County buildings. County Manager Christi Dockery stated that staff would look into estimates and bring back results to the Board for their consideration at a future meeting.

A COLA raise of \$2000 per employee was discussed, a number based on the current CPI. Chairman Mathis asked that Ms. Jones provide the Board with more numbers and information regarding this item for their consideration as well as any health insurance considerations. Commissioner Guarnieri voiced support for the COLA, but also suggested looking into a merit raise system, stating that productivity is not encouraged by giving everyone the same amount of money in the form of a raise.

Ron Rowe will be providing an estimate in regards to retirement plan changes. Chairman Mathis stated that any major change would result in the County having to spend a lot of money, but is something the Board needs to

discuss.

Commissioner Guarnieri added that there is an obvious retention problem, because while we do need to attract people, we also need to keep in mind those that have been here. Ms. Dockery added that there are longevity raises of 2.5% given to employees at every three (3) year anniversary, which is something many counties do not provide. Staff also will provide options and suggestions to the Board to modify premiums and costs for employee healthcare.

Chairman Mathis asked staff to look into fuel suppliers and also as to why we reportedly only purchase premium gasoline and not regular.

Commissioner Guarnieri also voiced support for a retention payment for employees in the winter in addition to the potential COLA raise. Chairman Mathis agreed and stated there needed to be a line item created for this within the budget. Commissioner Roland commented that it may be better to give a larger retention payment than COLA; some employees may prefer to have more of a lump sum near the holidays than an increase in salary that is spread throughout the year. A discussion began as to whether to make a stipulation that an employee has to have been employed for a certain span of time to receive the retention payment. Commissioner Guarnieri suggested prorating the amount depending on hiring date, if not employed for a full year prior. Employees will be notified of the amount of the raise as well as the amount of the retention payment at the end of the year.

Commissioner Roland asked if there was a lot of overtime being paid out to which Finance Director Heather Jones replied that some departments, specifically within the Public Safety realm, will have overtime partially due to how the shift schedules fall.

County Manager Christi Dockery also mentioned the idea of increasing the amount of vacation sell back from 40 hours per year to 80 hours per year, with the stipulation that employees must retain a certain amount of hours and not cash out everything they have. Another idea is to allow employees who have worked for over 5 years to receive two (2) additional personal days. All are ideas for retention of employees. Chairman Mathis stated that the biggest problem is recruitment.

Commissioner Guarnieri stated that as long as we are better than the private sector in terms of benefits, we will look attractive. According to recently reviewed surveys from employees, take home pay seems more important than a change in health care. Finance Director Heather Jones stated that the number one issue brought up in those surveys was retirement. Ms. Dockery added that we were in a defined contribution plan, but have switched to a defined benefit plan, with new hires being given the defined benefit plan. Commissioner Guarnieri suggested allowing new hires to choose between the two plans. Chairman Mathis stated that employees are steered towards the plan that would benefit the County the most.

Finance Director Heather Jones discussed making changes to the nicotine use program within the wellness program, citing specifically adding a clause stating that if an employee begins tobacco usage they must notify County staff so their rates may be appropriately reflected to show such information. Chairman Mathis voiced support.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NONE

PUBLIC FORUM

Citizens will be allowed to address the Board of Commissioners regarding any issues or complaints. Individuals should sign up prior to the start of the meeting.

No citizens took part in the Public Forum

ANNOUNCEMENTS

(A) The next regularly scheduled County Commission meeting is ***Tuesday, April 25, 2023 at 6:00pm.***

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:16pm.

Lee County is a thriving vibrant community celebrated for its value of tradition encompassing a safe family oriented community, schools of excellence, and life long opportunities for prosperity and happiness without sacrificing the rural agricultural tapestry.

Persons with special needs relating to handicapped accessibility or foreign language interpretation should contact the ADA Coordinator at (229) 759-6000 or through the Georgia Relay Service (800) 255-0056 (TDD) or (800) 355-0135 (voice). This person can be contacted at the T. Page Tharp Building in Leesburg, Georgia between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays, and will assist citizens with special needs given proper notice of seven (7) working days. The meeting rooms and buildings are handicap accessible.

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